

# Ministry of Grace

## Revelation Chapter 3

### The Last 3 Messages to the Churches

#### General

It has been said that spiritual ministries often go through four stages: a man, a movement, a machine, and then a monument. The rise to prominence often happens quickly, but the fall of any organization, whether a Christian ministry or a world-wide power like Rome (or the USA), usually happens slowly over a period of time. And, that decline is seldom perceived even by the people it affects the most.

In the three churches we will be looking at in this study, we see the extremes of that life cycle. Sardis is late in the process, dying, but barely alive; Philadelphia is at the peak of its life and effectiveness; and Laodicea is dead, although its members aren't yet aware of it. By looking at these three churches, along with the previous four, we can see that the danger point for any church is when its life and ministry have become easy and comfortable. The lack of opposition to the Christian message may seem like a good thing, but the Christian life needs opposition to thrive. The primary reason for a lack of opposition to the Christian message is the lack of fervent witness and outreach by the church itself. And – the primary reason for loss of fervency and outreach by the church is the increasing worldliness of the church. Christian beware! Remember, we are to be “in” the world, but not “of” the world.

#### The Church at Sardis

Sardis (the modern day tiny village of Sart) is about thirty miles southeast of Thyatira at the junction of five main roads. It is the old capital of Lydia, one of the richest areas in Asia. Its growth to wealth and importance was originally due to its rich deposits of gold. The gold was washed down from the mountains and caught in sheepskins. The legend of the “golden fleece” is said to have originated from this method of mining gold. In the 6th century Sardis was one of the first places to make coins out of gold and silver as a medium of exchange.

Another myth that originated at Sardis is that of the legendary king Midas. It is said that he was the king of Sardis and that he was rewarded by the god Dionysus so that all he touched was turned to gold. But as this also came to affect the food he was about to eat, he asked to be released from his powers. Dionysus had him bathe in the Pactolus River, resulting in the vast presence of gold in the stream, and King Midas was again a normal man.

Sardis was built on the edge of a mountain with three sides guarded by near vertical walls that dropped 1500 feet into the valley below with the Pactolus River running along its one open access in the front. As a result, the city was nearly impregnable. In spite of its easily defended position, however, it was conquered by Cyrus the Persian, then by Alexander the Great, and finally by Antiochus the Great after a siege of two years. Its primary industry was harvesting wool, dyeing it, and making garments from it. At one time it was also known as a slave-mart.

The city of Sardis was a city of softness and luxury, of apathy and immorality and the church had become indistinguishable from the unsaved. The unsaved in Sardis saw the church as a respectable group of people who were neither dangerous nor desirable. The church in Sardis was dead! There may have been a few genuine Christians there, but it was populated primarily by unredeemed, unregenerate people. Since the time of this letter, successive earthquakes, and the ravages of the Saracens and the Turks, have reduced this once-celebrated city to little more than a heap of ruins and the church has long-since disappeared.

### **Divine Attribute: Revelation 3:1a**

**<sup>1</sup>to the angel of the church in Sardis write: 'The words of him who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars.**

“seven Spirits of God” – Here, Jesus is describing himself as having all of the Spirit of God. There is only one Holy Spirit (**Ephesians 4:4**), but the number seven demonstrates fullness and completeness. We will see this again in the next two chapters of Revelation where the Holy Spirit is represented as seven burning lamps (**Revelation 4:5**) and as seven all-seeing eyes (**Revelation 5:6**). The Holy Spirit gives life to the church, and life is exactly what the people at Sardis needed. For a list of the seven spirits, see **Isaiah 11:2**.

“and the seven stars.” – **Revelation 1:20** told us that the seven stars are the angels (messengers) of the seven churches. Christ is here depicted as working in His churches through the Holy Spirit and through the leaders of the churches. Without these, a church is dead just like the church at Sardis.

### **Reproof: Revelation 3:1b-3a**

**<sup>1</sup>I know your works. You have the reputation of being alive, but you are dead. <sup>2</sup>Wake up, and strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your works complete in the sight of my God. <sup>3</sup>Remember, then, what you received and heard. Keep it, and repent.**

“You have the reputation of being alive, but you are dead” – This church was well known for being a vibrant, alive Christian church. In reality, however, it was spiritually dead. This church may have had lots of programs, abundant giving, and numerous outreach ministries in the community. It had all the trappings of Christianity, but it was void of the Spirit of God.

### **Warning: Revelation 3:3b**

**If you will not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come against you.**

As we said earlier, the location of Sardis was nearly impregnable. But “nearly” is not good enough. This great city was conquered three times. Each time it was because the sentries failed to do their job. At least one of those times (possible even twice), Sardis was conquered because the sentries fell asleep. This may have been a reminder to the church that they needed to be vigilant and not fall asleep spiritually. It most certainly is a warning to all churches who consider themselves successful. They may be surprised by the Day of God’s Judgment, the time we know of as the Tribulation.

In the 1970’s there was a Christian movie entitled “A Thief in the Night.” It was about people who missed the rapture. This has caused a lot of people to believe that John’s reference here to “a thief” is a warning that this church will miss the rapture if they don’t wake up. However, if you read verses about the rapture, you will see that it comes with a trumpet blast and an announcement with an archangel-like voice. That’s not how a thief comes. What does come as a thief is the Day of the Lord, which begins with the tribulation. It is at that hour that the Lord will come against the “permanent earth dwellers.” We’ll talk more about this later.

Most of the church at Sardis was not saved. They will miss the Rapture and go through the Tribulation.

### **Commendation: Revelation 3:4**

**<sup>4</sup>Yet you have still a few names in Sardis, people who have not soiled their garments, and they will walk with me in white, for they are worthy.**

“soiled” – Greek *molunō*, means “to stain, to soil, to pollute, or to defile” – Sardis had a reputation as a very rich town and was known for its wool dyeing industry. It had the reputation as the inventors of the wool dyeing process. In this passage, garments represent the “character” of the members. There were a few people in the church at Sardis who had not sold-out to the worldliness and “possessions” obsession of the others at Sardis.

“white” – This is used throughout the Bible as a symbol for purity, sinlessness, and holiness. White robes were commonly worn at festivals and celebrations. In Sardis most of the people wore these white robes because they

had obtained them for themselves. The redeemed ones, however, will wear them in the eternal celebration because they are given the garments as a sign of their faith in the gracious gift of God.

“worthy” – Not because of what they had done or what they had obtained for themselves, but because of their faith and resulting imputation of Christ’s righteousness.

**Promise: Revelation 3:5, 6**

**<sup>5</sup>The one who conquers will be clothed thus in white garments, and I will never blot his name out of the book of life. I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels. <sup>6</sup>He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.**

“I will never blot out his name from the Book of Life” This does not in any way indicate that some names will be blotted out of the Book of Life, though some have argued so. It is a promise to the “overcomers” or “conquerors,” which we learned in the previous chapter is a reference to all born-again Christians. This statement is a guarantee that “once saved, always saved.” God will not remove ANY name from the Book of Life because it only contains the names of those who have been saved.

This “book of life” is often confused with the book referred to by Moses in Exodus chapter thirty-two:

But the LORD said to Moses, "Whoever has sinned against me, I will blot out of my book.  
(Exodus 32:33)

This is a reference to the “book of the living” which contains the name of all who are physically alive at any given time. Hence, the warning given to Moses is that those who sin against God will lose their physical life, which all sinners will lose.

**Historical Representative:** The Protestant Church Age - the 16th century to the present - having the appearance of life.

**Church Characteristic:** The appearance of life without the presence of the Holy Spirit. Many formal ritualistic practices with no spiritual empowerment.

**Modern Day Equivalent:** The rich, self-sufficient church that looks alive but is spiritually dead.

## **The Church at Philadelphia**

Philadelphia was situated on a hillside about thirty miles southeast of Sardis. It had never attained the prominence of most of the other cities of the seven churches. This city was founded around 190 BC by Attalus II, king of Pergamos. Some scholars believe that his unusual devotion to his brother earned the city its name, "brotherly love." The city was an important commercial stop on a major trade route called the Imperial Post Road, a first-century mail route. The city of Philadelphia was located in a wine growing district where their chief deity was Bacchus (Dionysus), the god of drunkenness and partying. Unfortunately, the city was located directly over a major geological fault and was destroyed several times by massive earthquakes.

The church itself was poor, not having many of the worldly possessions of the other churches. Yet, of all the seven churches it had the longest duration of prosperity as a Christian church. It is one of only two of the seven churches (Smyrna being the other) that did not receive a reproof in its letter.

**Divine Attribute: Revelation 3:7**

**<sup>7</sup>And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write, “These things says He who is holy, He who is true, He who has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens:**

“He who is holy” – Compare to **Mark 1:23, 24** where even the demons declare that Jesus is the Holy One.

And immediately there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit. And he cried out, "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are--the Holy One of God." (**Mark 1:23,24**)

and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God. (John 6:69)

“He who has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens” – This may be a reference to [Isaiah 22:22](#) where Eliakim the son of Hilkiah who was a steward of King Hezekiah was given the key to the house of David, meaning that he alone had access into all that belonged to the king.

And I will place on his shoulder the key of the house of David. He shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open. ([Isaiah 22:22](#))

This description of our Lord indicates His omnipotence and His ever watchful guiding hand upon the church of Philadelphia.

### **Commendation: Revelation 3:8-11**

**<sup>8</sup>I know your works. Behold, I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut. I know that you have but little power, and yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name. <sup>9</sup>Behold, I will make those of the synagogue of Satan who say that they are Jews and are not, but lie--behold, I will make them come and bow down before your feet and they will learn that I have loved you. <sup>10</sup>Because you have kept my word about patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell on the earth. <sup>11</sup>I am coming soon. Hold fast what you have, so that no one may seize your crown.**

“I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut” – Some believe that this is an allusion to the open door into heaven mentioned in chapter 4, or to our promised entrance into heaven. However, it is more reasonable to see this as God’s divine enabling for the spread of the gospel. See the following examples of Paul’s use of this “open door” expression.

But I will stay in Ephesus until Pentecost, for a wide door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many adversaries. ([1 Corinthians 16:8, 9](#))

When I came to Troas to preach the gospel of Christ, even though a door was opened for me in the Lord, ([2 Corinthians 2:12](#))

At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison-- ([Colossians 4:3](#))

“you have but little power” – The meaning is not, “you only have a little strength left” but “you now have a little bit of strength.” We do not accomplish anything for God in our own strength, but as Christ said to Paul in [2 Corinthians 12:9](#), “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” The church in Philadelphia had a little bit of strength in themselves, yet they had great strength in the Lord.

“I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world” – “The hour of trial is most likely a reference to Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> week, which we refer to as the Tribulation. The word here translated as “hour” is the Greek word *hora*, which refers to an interval of time, but not to a specific amount of time. It could literally be translated as “time period.” Also, the word translated “from” is actually the Greek preposition *ek*, which means “out of.” Therefore, God’s promise to the church in Philadelphia (and all members of the true church) is that we will be kept *out of the period* of the Tribulation, not protected in it, but kept out of it. This is additional evidence of a pre-tribulation rapture of the church.

“those who dwell on the earth.” – The word translated “dwell” is *katoikeō*, which means, “to dwell permanently.” Thus, “those who dwell on the earth” refers to those who make their permanent home on this earth as opposed to those who make their home in heaven. This expression is used repeatedly in the book of Revelation as a reference to those who receive God’s judgment on the earth during the tribulation period. Throughout this book, we will refer to these people as the “permanent earth dwellers.”

“that no one may seize your crown.” – This is not a warning regarding loss of salvation, but a warning regarding loss of reward. Let me repeat that, this is **not** a warning regarding **loss of salvation**, but a **warning** regarding **loss of reward**.

**Reproof:** None. Like the church at Smyrna, there was no reproof levied against this church

**Promise:** **Revelation 3:12, 13**

**<sup>12</sup>The one who conquers, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God. Never shall he go out of it, and I will write on him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down from my God out of heaven, and my own new name. <sup>13</sup>He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.**

“a pillar in the temple of My God” – When the city of Philadelphia was destroyed by earthquakes, it was not uncommon for the large temple pillars to remain standing because of their firm and solid footing. This promise is to assure the Christians in the church that they would have an eternal position in God’s kingdom. This is obviously metaphorical language since there will be no temple in heaven (see **Revelation 21:22**).

“write on him” – Both the name of God and the name of New Jerusalem are to be written on those who conquer (the overcomers.) This indicates complete ownership by the king and authorization to be in His Royal City.

“which comes down from my God out of heaven” – This clearly is a reference to the Heavenly Jerusalem which appears in the New Heavens and New Earth (see **Revelation 21:2**). This distinguishes it from the new Jerusalem which will exist during the Millennial reign of Christ.

**Historical Representative:** The Missionary Church Age - 17th century to the present - submitted & committed to Christ and protected by God

**Church Characteristic:** A fundamental church giving the pre-eminence to God alone, more concerned with doctrinal truth and faith in action than form and tradition or social issues.

**Modern Day Equivalent:** The empowered, living church

## **The Church at Laodicea**

Laodicea was located in the Lycus River Valley, the southwest area of Phrygia. The name “Laodicea” means “the people rule” or “the judgment of the people.” It became the wealthiest, most important commercial center in the region. It was primarily known for three industries: banking, wool (especially a glossy black wool cloth), and medicine (notably an eye salve). It contained a famous medical school as well as a racecourse and three theaters. Laodicea was located about 6 miles south of Hierapolis and about 10 miles northwest of Colossae. Hierapolis was known for its hot mineral springs which were reported to have healing properties. Colossae was known for its refreshingly cold and pure mountain water. Laodicea had no natural source of water and had to bring it in via an underground aqueduct. This aqueduct produced water that was neither hot nor cold and was so full of minerals that it was quite offensive to the unsuspecting partaker of that water. As a result, the first reaction of those unfamiliar with this water was usually to spit it out of their mouths.

**Divine Attribute:** **Revelation 3:14**

**<sup>14</sup>And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write: 'The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God's creation.'**

“the Amen” – Transliterated from the Hebrew word *amane*, meaning “the truth,” something that this church didn’t have. It also means that He is the fulfillment of all of God’s promises and the full satisfaction of the Law. Jesus, himself even claimed to be the truth of God:

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. (John 14:6)

“the faithful and true witness” – He is also the witness who reveals the truth about God to man.

“the beginning of God's creation” – the word translated “beginning” is the Greek word *arche*, meaning “the originator,” not the first chronologically. False teachers have tried to take this verse as proof that Christ is a created being rather than God himself. But John tells us himself in his gospel account that Christ is the creator.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. (John 1:1-3)

It is likely that this false teaching (that Christ is a created being) was part of the false teaching called Gnosticism prevalent in the church of Laodicea, as well as the nearby church in Colossae. This teaching also held that there was “higher spiritual knowledge” not contained in Scripture and only available to believers in this heresy. To the church in Colossae, Paul wrote:

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities--all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. (Colossians 1:15-17)

**Commendation:** There is none! Of the seven churches, this is the only one to whom no commendation was given.

**Reproof: Revelation 3:15-17**

**<sup>15</sup>I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! <sup>16</sup>So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth. <sup>17</sup>For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked.**

“I know your works” – Christ says he knows their works. They were a church that apparently did many deeds but none of their deeds were motivated by the Spirit of God. They were, instead, motivated by the selfishness and greed that motivated the rest of society in Laodicea. Hence, they lacked the spiritual fervor that characterizes works done for Christ.

“you are neither cold nor hot.” – The word translated “cold” is *psuchros*, which means “cool” or “cold.” As a metaphor, *it does not represent lack of zeal or spiritual lifelessness*; rather, it represents the refreshing quality of a cool drink of water on a hot day. “neither cold nor hot,” is an obvious metaphorical reference to the hot soothing mineral water of Hierapolis and the cool, refreshing water of Colossae. Both of these had soothing properties that attracted people from all over the region. Even our Lord referred to the refreshing quality of cool water (*potērion psuchrou* – a cool drink, or a cup of cold water):

And whoever gives one of these little ones even a cup of cold water because he is a disciple, truly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward. (Matthew 10:42)

The members of this church were neither zealous for the Lord nor were they inclined to comfort those who were going through trials. They were mostly unsaved people who attended church regularly claiming to know the truth without practicing it. Like the Pharisees, they were content to practice a self-righteous religion; they were hypocrites playing games. Lukewarm “Christians” are like the unbelieving Jews of whom Paul lamented:

For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness. (Romans 10:2, 3)

... having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. (2 Timothy 3:5).

So, like the water of Laodicea which was often spit out because of its taste, the works of this church were rejected by God because of their lack of faith.

“I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing” – The people of Laodicea believed they had all they needed, but they were only focusing on worldly things, not spiritual things.

“you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked” – These people had no faith; they were wretched. They had no spiritual possessions, they were miserable and poor. In spite of their touted eye salve, they had no spiritual vision. And, in spite of the fame of their black wool cloth, they had no righteousness to cover their spiritual nakedness.

Laodicea was a very wealthy city that boasted itself as a great banking center; was famous for the shiny, soft, black woolen clothing that was produced there; and was famous as a medical center and provider of a special eye salve that was exported all over the Roman Empire. As a result, the people of Laodicea were very wealthy, believing they had it all, when in fact they were, “wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked” spiritually.

Thomas Aquinas once called upon Pope Innocent II. The pope was counting a large sum of money. “You see, Thomas,” said the pope, “the church can no longer say, “Silver and gold have I none.” “True, holy Father,” said Thomas, “and neither can it say to the lame anymore, “Arise and walk.” The church at Laodicea was popular, prosperous, pragmatic, polished, and proud. But it was powerless. [John Phillips]

### **Warning: Revelation 3:18-20**

**<sup>18</sup>I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, so that you may be rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, so that you may see. <sup>19</sup>Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent. <sup>20</sup>Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.**

“I counsel you to buy from me gold ... that you may be rich, and white garments, so that you may clothe yourself ... and salve to anoint your eyes, so that you may see” – Gold is a sign of wealth (material or spiritual). The Laodiceans needed spiritual gold, which they lacked. White garments are a symbol of righteousness (sinlessness), but all the Laodiceans had for spiritual clothing was blackened by sin. The Laodiceans boasted of their great eye salve, yet they were spiritually blind.

“Behold, I stand at the door and knock ...” - This verse is often quoted as an invitation to salvation, “Behold I stand at the door *of your heart* and knock.” Although it *may* be applied as a call to salvation, the words, “of your heart” are not in the text. In this text, God is standing outside the church, asking to come in to be part of true worship and fellowship.

There are a couple of things we can deduce from this. The first, and most condemning, is that God is not an integral part of this church, he is on the outside. They may be confessing Christians and they may even end their prayers with, “In Jesus name.” However, the presence of Christ and the Holy Spirit are not welcome there. They have all they need. They have a strict order of service and a predetermined timeline for it. These are like the Pharisees of Jesus’ day who have established their own righteousness and wouldn’t recognize the real Righteous One even if he were standing in their midst (they are not “Hot”).

The other thing we can deduce from the closed door of this church is their ambivalence toward strangers (they were not “Cold”). This may be a hint to the people of Laodicea of how they are to redeem themselves in the coming tribulation period. At the end of the tribulation, when He returns, Christ will perform what is known as the “Sheep and Goat Judgment.” Here’s how Jesus described it in Matthew’s gospel account:

“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I

was thirsty and you gave me drink, *I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.*' (Matthew 25:31-36)

“Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline” – The church at Laodicea was comfortable and appears not to have suffered any persecution or significant opposition. Because of this and their great wealth, they were very comfortable and complacent. They also apparently did not experience God’s chastening. They were spiritually dead.

**Promise: Revelation 3:21, 22**

**<sup>21</sup>The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne. <sup>22</sup>He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.**

“The one who conquers” – This expression is given in reference to every one of the seven churches. We learned in chapter 2 that “conquer” is from the Greek word *nikaō*, which means “to be victorious, to conquer, or to overcome.” And, in John’s gospel we are told who the overcomers are.

For everyone who has been born of God *overcomes* the world. And this is the victory that has *overcome* the world—our faith. Who is it that *overcomes* the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? (1 John 5:4, 5)

From this we see that the expression “the one who conquers” is a reference to all Christians. In the letter to Laodicea all Christians are told that we will reign with Christ.

“He who has an ear, let him hear” - This command is also one that is given to all seven churches. It is a command to all Christians who read this book to pay close attention to the things said to the churches. The church in Laodicea was not listening to the Holy Spirit.

Are you listening?

**Historical Representative:** This church represents the Apostate Church Age - 19th century A.D. to the present - the church of form, ritual, great worship, and a social gospel

**Church Characteristic:** A rich, man-made church claiming to worship Christ but not having true salvation nor the empowering of the Holy Spirit.

**Modern Day Equivalent:** The Phony, Social Church

**So What?**

Previously we looked at chapter 2 in the book of Revelation. There we saw that all of those four churches were tempted by the things of the world and it led to some very un-Christ-like actions. If you recall, I challenged each one of us to take stock of how much we are focused on the things of the world versus the things of God. We must never forget,

... all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. (1 John 2:15-16)

One way to take stock of what we’re focused on is to ask ourselves, “What are my goals in life?” Am I hoping that the future will bring me a new house, perhaps a new car (or at least one that runs better than the one I currently have)? Am I looking forward to getting a better job or maybe just getting any job, or getting out of debt? Perhaps, I want to travel more. Or, maybe, I simply want to improve my lot in life and feel like I’m important to others. These are all worthwhile things, but - they have no eternal value. What is more important is to focus on how we can better serve God. When we get to the Bema Seat, we will find out how much of our effort in this life was directed toward doing what God wants us to do, as opposed to doing what we want to do.

Most Christian churches today, and ours is no exception, need more of the Spirit of God and less of the spirit of the world. In fact, many Christian churches today need a lot more of the Spirit of God and a lot less of the spirit of the world.

Fifty years ago, it was not uncommon for people to go to church on Sunday morning for both Sunday School and the preaching service. But they also went Sunday evening for the less formal singing and preaching service, and they usually went to prayer meeting on Wednesday evening as well. And – sometimes they even got together with other Christians on Tuesday or Thursday to go door-to-door calling as a witness for Christ. Today, it has become increasingly difficult to get people to attend any meeting other than the Sunday morning service (except those who choose to go to the Saturday evening service instead, so they can have their Sundays free to do what *they* want.)

We have to ask ourselves, where is God in our priorities? I suspect that He is somewhere up there behind being successful, getting the bills paid, and being liked by others. Do we go to church to feel better about ourselves, or do we go to church as a service of worship? Do we sing the worship songs to feel good, or do we sing them with sincere praise in our hearts for who God is and what He has done for us? Here's how the Apostle Paul expressed it to the Christians in Rome:

I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind ... (Romans 12:1-2)

I fear that many, many people go to church on Sunday because that's what good Christians do! I begin to wonder just how many Christians today really are saved? Having said that, let's all ask ourselves, "Am I really saved?" Are you? Sure, you said the sinner's prayer and asked Jesus to come into your heart, but is He just your Savior? Is he just your free pass into heaven? If he is not also your Lord, your Master, your Owner, the One who has every right to tell you how to live your life, then you have to ask yourself if He's actually your savior at all.

Do you realize how many scriptures link salvation to the lordship of Jesus? Here are a few (we'll start with the Old Testament):

For I am the **LORD** your God, the Holy One of Israel, your **Savior**. ... (Isaiah 43:3a)

... I am the **LORD**, and besides me there is no **savior**. (Isaiah 43:11)

... Then all flesh shall know that I am the **LORD** your **Savior**, and your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob." (Isaiah 49:26b)

... and you shall know that I, the **LORD**, am your **Savior** and your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob. (Isaiah 60:16b)

But I am the **LORD** your God from the land of Egypt; you know no God but me, and besides me there is no **savior**. (Hosea 13:4)

For unto you is born this day in the city of David a **Savior**, who is Christ the **Lord**. (Luke 2:11)

But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a **Savior**, the **Lord** Jesus Christ, (Philippians 3:20)

But grow in the grace and knowledge of our **Lord** and **Savior** Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen. (2 Peter 3:18)

to the only God, our **Savior**, through Jesus Christ our **Lord**, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen. (Jude 1:25)

So, what's the big deal? Let me say again, If Jesus is not your Lord, your Master, your Owner, the one who has every right to tell you how to live your life, then you have to ask yourself if He's really your savior.

Here's how the Apostle Paul talked about salvation to the Christians in Rome:

because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is *Lord* and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. (Romans 10:9-10)

Yes, my friends, we are surrounded by the world system. We are constantly being bombarded with advertisements telling us how wonderful this world system is. Satan is constantly tempting us to satisfy our own desires rather than submitting completely to God. And, how do we respond? We should respond with indignation. But, instead, we typically get sucked-in to being friendly with the world and all that it seems to have to offer. Do you know what James, the brother of our Lord, had to say about being a friend of the world system?

... Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an *enemy* of God. (James 4:4)

Did you hear that? He makes himself an enemy of God! If you believe in an all-powerful Creator God, one who offered up his own Son to provide a way for you to be his friend (and, yes, more than a friend), to be His child, then you probably don't want to be His enemy, do you?

## **Now What?**

We've just gone through chapters two and three of the Book of Revelation. We've learned about seven churches, most of which allowed the world system to become more important than serving God. Those who had the blessings of the world did not receive God's full blessing. Philadelphia, however, had very few of the blessings of the world, but they had an abundance of God's blessings, both now and for eternity.

We all have a choice to make, and the sooner we make the right choice, the sooner we will recognize the blessings of being God's child. We can pretend to be a good Christian - all the while enjoying the pleasures of the world, which incidentally, will never satisfy our desires; or we can submit to our owner, our master, our loving Father, and resist the world with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our mind.

Now, I'm not going to tell you that if you commit to being God's loyal, obedient servant, that your life will go smoothly and you won't have any challenges in life. In fact, the opposite is true. But the decision that you make right now will mean the difference between getting into heaven with a crown and the words, "well done, my good and faithful servant" echoing in your ears vs. entering into heaven without a reward, but with the smell of smoke clinging to you as everything you've ever done has just been burnt up. You'll still have your free pass into heaven, but at what cost?

Keep this in mind - life on this earth is temporary, but heaven is eternal!

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